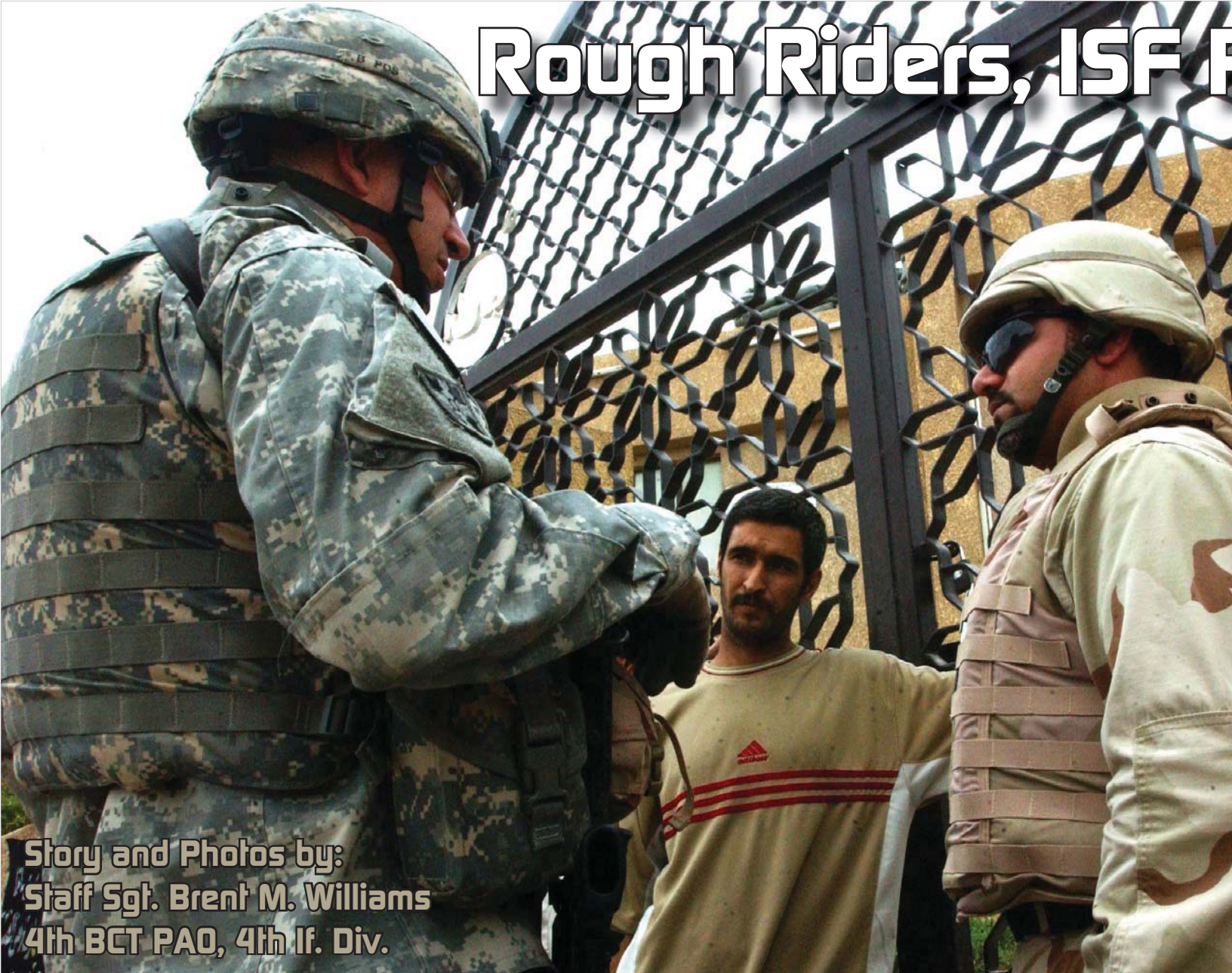


# Rough Riders, ISF



**Story and Photos by:**  
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**BAGHDAD** — The Soldiers of 8th Squadron, 10th Cavalry, maintain security for Coalition Forces in Central and Southern Baghdad's Al Rasheed District. Their duty is part of the 4th Infantry Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team and its mission is to help the new Iraqi government and its security forces take responsibility for their nation's capital.

Working with Iraqi Security Forces to combat Anti-Iraqi Forces, the 8-10 Cav. conducts combined patrols daily with Iraq's Ministry of Interior Commandos and Iraqi Army sol-

diers. The combined forces patrol markets, residential areas and mosques in an effort to build trust and maintain security in the local communities, said Lt. Col. Gian Gentile, squadron commander, 8-10 Cav.

"That is what I see as the beginning of trust between the Iraqi people and their security forces, and once we have a basic level of trust, I really believe that the ISF will be able to destroy the insurgents very quickly," said the native of Danville, Calif., who has more than 24 years

in military service.

The Iraqi people, explained Gentile, will begin to recognize the legitimacy of the ISF, once they feel that they have a security force that can fundamentally protect them from the AIF.

"I do believe that they are starting to see in the ISF that ability," Gentile said, "and that is what is going to produce, I think, peace and ultimately, the defeat of the insurgents."

Gentile recalled a recent event as an example of the challenges that





# Partner to Quell Sectarian Strife



**Lt. Col. Gian Gentile, squadron commander, 8th Squadron, 10th Cavalry, routinely meets with local mosque leaders in South Baghdad to discuss security concerns and assess the climate of the local communities.**

lie ahead for Coalition and Iraqi Forces alike.

The Iraqi Police, acting upon a tip that several homes in an area in South Baghdad were being used to build Improvised Explosive Devices, took hostile small-arms fire from a neighboring Sunni mosque, he said. The Iraqi Police returned fire, and during the engagement two officers were wounded, one seriously.

The Rough Riders of 8-10 Cav. responded to the Iraqi Police's call for help, and a patrol in the area arrived on the scene to provide medical attention to the wounded police officers.

The guards at the Sunni Mosque then opened fire on the American Soldiers.

"My Soldiers quickly, aggressively and accurately returned fire to those guards in the mosque, wounding one and killing another," Gentile said.

Immediately, U.S. Forces working with their Iraqi counterparts addressed the residents of the mosque, using the loudspeakers in their vehicles to call for a cease fire.

Arriving on the scene shortly afterward, the senior MOI commander on the ground and the squadron commander met with the leaders in the mosque to find a peaceful solution to the tense situation.

Gentile attributes the violence to a lack of trust between the Sunni men and the predominately Shiite security forces operating in Baghdad. Recent incidents of sectarian strife created by Shiite militias posing as Iraqi Security Forces and attacking Sunni mosques has contributed to the Iraqi public's distrust.

Despite the random violence, Gentile believes that the basic essentials of trust are being established between the Shias and the Sunnis in his area of operations, and since the event at the Sunni Mosque, his area has been relatively quiet.

"What needs to start happening

quickly, right away, and this is what I tell the men who live in and work at city mosques," Gentile said, "the Iraqis cannot shoot at Iraqi Police, at MOI Commandos, because they are the legitimate security forces of the government of Iraq.

"They have to acknowledge that and cannot shoot at MOI Forces. That is where we have to start at. That is the beginning."

The Iraqi Security Forces contribute a lot to the Rough Rider's current mission, said Command Sgt. Major Rafael Rodriguez, command sergeant major, 8-10 Cav.

In fact, it would be impossible without them, explained Rodriguez.

"There is a hell a lot more Iraqi

soldiers than American Soldiers," he said.

"I wouldn't compare them to American Soldiers; it takes a long time to get them to that level," he said. "They contribute a lot on the checkpoints. They are doing a lot of patrols. They are doing combined patrols with us daily."

Rodriguez acknowledges that the role of his cavalry battalion, working in the Iraqi urban environment, is considerably different than that of the light reconnaissance as intended for the scouts of the new U.S. Army's Unit of Action.

Despite this fact, explained Rodriguez, the Rough Riders of 8-10 Cav. are well-trained, confident in their skills and the ability of their

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**-Lt. Col. Gian Gentile.**



## *Continued from Page 4*

equipment, and dedicated to accomplishing their mission.

"The Soldiers know they have a job to do," Rodriguez said. "They know they are making a difference. Stuff that when people watch or read a newspaper, they don't see, but the Soldier on the ground, he sees.

"He sees the little kids smile. He sees the Iraqi people making change. They are out on the ground touching the Iraqi public. People don't appreciate what the American Soldier is doing here, because they are not on the ground."

As the cavalry scouts of 8-10 Cav. secure South and Central Baghdad, they are also working to train and equip the Iraqi Army, he explained.

"I look back, and I remember the Iraqi Army in (2003), and the IA, now, they are about 200 percent better," Rodriguez said. "They got what soldiers do—somebody is in charge of them, telling them where to go, where to be, where to orient their weapons.

Now they stand; they fight."

Recognizing the long work that lies ahead for U.S. and Iraqi Forces, Rodriguez knows that his Soldiers will be successful in their mission.

The Iraqi people tell his Soldiers that all is not perfect right now, he said, but the Iraqis also tell his Soldiers that it will get better.

"Maybe, at the strategic level, there are challenges; at the political level, there are challenges; but at the Soldiers' level, we just do what we are told and come back."



***Lt. Col. Gian Gentile inspects Iraqi checkpoint operations in Southwest Baghdad.***



***8-10 Cav. "Rough Riders" make a stop outside a mosque in Southwest Baghdad***